

When we get tips — that's why a lot of people don't have success because they wait," Melton said. If we can, [we] go get them now. As a result of us doing this ... because people are seeing what we're doing and that we are responsive; we've had 317 tips come in on that phone," Melton said in late August.

On the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Facebook page, numbers to the sheriff's office and the text-a-tip line are listed on each most-wanted photo. In addition, community members can send an email to the email address listed on the information page on Facebook. For more information on the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, see page 32.

In Jackson, the Jackson Police Department has set up a link on its Facebook page allowing people to send the police department completely anonymous emails.

"We get a lot of tips that way," Jackson Police Officer Shawn Howard said. "And not just tips from things we've posted, but tips from drug deals and under-age drinking. They'll just send in random tips on different things."

In January, the Jackson Police Department posted several un-served UNITE warrants from a round up. Within 20 minutes the agency received the first call and within the hour they had one of the individuals wanted for those warrants arrested, Howard said. Since then, Jackson Police have posted surveillance images from a purse theft at Wal-Mart, and the suspects were quickly identified, and images from a suspect who stole a truck mirror in the parking lot.

With a city population just around 2,500, the agency's 2,198 fans as of Nov. 7, is an impressive number, insinuating that nearly the entire population of Jackson is a fan of the police department's Facebook page.

But Jackson Police actually took the idea of starting a Facebook page from the Richmond Police Department, Howard said.

"I saw Richmond PD's page and ... started realizing how many people in our community actually use Facebook, and I thought it would be a great tool to use," he said.

Richmond Police have been ahead of the social media bandwagon for sometime, hosting a MySpace page for a long time



▲ The Franklin County Sheriff's Office has been extremely successful using its Facebook page for obtaining tips and leads on the county's most wanted individuals. Sheriff Pat Melton also uses the page to post information to the community and to build rapport with citizens.

before switching over to a Facebook page a little more than an a year ago, Maj. Bob Mott said. Richmond Police, like many other law enforcement agencies, post everything from patrol warrants and surveillance video and crimes of the day to updates of traffic issues in the community, press releases and activities and events in the community.

"A lot of people monitor it, it's just another way to get your local news," Mott said. "It produces that many more witnesses that you wouldn't have known. Not all of it is correct, but we'll get hits on 90 percent of what we put on there. It's just that many more eyes on the street looking for people."

In some cases, it is literally someone on the street in the right place at the right time that helps catch a suspect amazingly quick. Richmond Police posted a man on Facebook and within one minute of posting it, a woman was reading it on her phone and saw him walking down the street. Literally, within five minutes of posting it, he was arrested, Mott said.

"It's a whole lot more helpful than I would have thought," Mott said of Facebook.

Bardstown's McCubbin agrees.

"Facebook, gosh, who doesn't have it," he said. "I went in kicking and now I think, can I survive a day without it?"

"I would think that if you're not taking advantage of social media, you're kind of missing out," Mott said. "You've got that many more witnesses, that many more eyes on the street that can look at somebody that's wanted or recognize a suspect in one of your surveillance videos."

Facebook has proven an extremely helpful tool for numerous agencies across Kentucky, and many communities are safer and more alert and vigilant because of the interaction fans have with local agencies' Facebook pages. It is a cost-effective way for law enforcement agencies to partner with the members of their community to keep criminals from continuing to walk the streets. And as a bonus, as community members positively interact with local law enforcement, a greater trust and mutual respect is formed.

"There is no excuse that even the smallest department can't have a Facebook page," McCubbin said. "And the amount of people that are on it — I think we're up to 400 plus people that 'like' us in our community. That's 400 people that put it on their page that 400 other people read and post and 400 other people read; so, we know it's getting out there."

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